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# General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

*Official Records*

**26**th plenary meeting
Monday, 6 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 9** (*continued*)

**General debate**

**The President**: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau, His Excellency Mr. Fernando Delfim da Silva, on whom I now call.

**Mr. da Silva** (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my country, Guinea-Bissau, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to reiterate our confidence in your ability to conduct the work of this session successfully. You can rest assured of the willingness of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau to cooperate with you.

I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the innovative and constructive manner in which he carried out his task.

Congratulations are also due the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, since his assumption of the Organization's highest office, has shouldered his important responsibilities with great resolve, *inter alia* with regard to United Nations reform. We encourage him to continue his work with the same dynamic spirit in order better to adapt our Organization to the current and future needs of a world in flux.

The General Assembly is meeting at a time when the Organization is going through a period of complex transition that has brought several questions to the fore. Guinea-Bissau is nevertheless convinced of the ability of the Organization and of Member States to define new policies and to develop suitable structures to deal with the new challenges that are being posed by international problems.

During the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations the leaders of the entire world solemnly reaffirmed the irreplaceable nature of the Organization's role as well as the need to reform and modernize the United Nations. The historic Declaration adopted at that time should continue to form the basis of the Organization's work, laying down as it does a framework for global action based on the principles and ideals of the Charter.

Accordingly, we welcome the important initiatives for reform taken by the Secretary-General, which in my delegation's view are deserving of the support of Member States.

My delegation believes that the expansion and democratization of the Security Council are also priority matters. That important body must reflect, both in its composition and in its decisions, the concerns of all Members and should have a more transparent basis and a more equitable geographical representation.

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Therefore, in keeping with the Harare Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), we believe that Africa should have two permanent seats in the Security Council, with the same privileges as the current members.

Similarly, we believe that the candidacies of Japan, Germany and Brazil to be permanent members of the Security Council deserve the serious attention of Guinea-Bissau, without prejudice to other proposals before us for consideration.

The United Nations has played a decisive role in international affairs since its founding. However, the challenges we are facing at the threshold of the twenty-first century are unprecedented and call for greater efforts from the Organization and all its Members, particularly in seeking the solution to financial problems, a sine qua non for effective progress in the reform process.

Despite the Organization's commitment to international peace and security, conflicts and fratricidal wars continue in various parts of the world, causing loss of life, massive displacements of population and floods of refugees. Africa, unfortunately, continues to furnish tragic examples of such scourges. The seriousness of these crises on our continent prompted the Security Council to devote a ministerial meeting to such problems on 25 September of this year in an effort to analyse their causes and propose suitable solutions.

In addition to conflicts in Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia, there are new tensions and crises in Sierra Leone, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

In respect to Angola, a country with which Guinea-Bissau enjoys a relationship of deep friendship, we welcome the progress made there towards restoring peace and achieving national reconciliation, and we encourage UNITA to make the efforts necessary to bring to completion the tasks set forth in the Lusaka Protocol.

In Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Somalia dialogue must prevail in the search for solutions to the problems that affect those countries.

In Sierra Leone, the United Nations — the Security Council in particular — must support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and OAU to restore the democratically elected Government.

In Liberia, we welcome the holding of free and fai elections and the return to peace. We urge th international community to continue to provide aid fo reconstruction and the consolidation of peace an democracy in that country.

Turning to Western Sahara, Guinea-Bissa welcomes the recent agreement concluded between th various parties and hopes that this new understanding wi lead to a definitive solution to this question through th holding of a referendum on self-determination.

The sanctions imposed on Libya by the Securit Council in 1992 seriously affect innocent people. Guinea Bissau encourages the parties concerned to seek, throug negotiations, a just solution to that question. The join proposals of OAU and the League of Arab States meri the attention of the international community.

Recent events in the Middle East have weakened th peace process. We urge the State of Israel and th Palestinian Authority to continue their dialogue to restor a climate of confidence, which is so essential to th establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peac in the region.

We are also concerned at the slow pace of th implementation of the peace agreement in Bosnia an Herzegovina, and we appeal to the various parties t show greater determination to resolve the conflict.

In East Timor, we continue to support th negotiations conducted under the auspices of th Secretary-General to find a just and definitive solution t this question.

The embargo imposed on Cuba continues seriousl to affect that country's people and development process We appeal to the parties to take the necessary step towards a definitive and satisfactory solution to thi problem.

On behalf of our Government, we should also lik to reiterate our conviction that the Republic of China o Taiwan deserves to regain its rightful place in the Unite Nations on the basis of respect for the principle o universality and the sovereign equality of States. Th Republic of China on Taiwan, a democratic country o over 20 million people that has made enormous progres in the economic and social field and with regard t respect for basic human rights, is today a reality tha cannot be ignored. The readmission of the Republic o

China to the United Nations and to all its specialized agencies would be an important factor for peace, stability and international cooperation.

Mindful of the fact that the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, play an essential role in the maintenance of international peace and security, we attach special importance to regional bodies with respect to conflict prevention and resolution.

In our subregion, the Economic Community of West African States has, with unprecedented success, been managing the crisis in Liberia through the establishment and deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group. The steps undertaken through the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) deserve special mention. Given the magnitude and complexity of the problems to be resolved, that organ needs increased support from the international community to complete its mission.

In this context, we believe that any approach to strengthening the capacities of African countries to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts must be supported. Thus, we welcome with interest the joint initiative of the United States, France and Great Britain in this area under the aegis of OAU.

Guinea-Bissau welcomes the adoption in Oslo of a draft convention for the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines and urges all countries to accede to it so that it may enter into force as soon as possible.

The intolerable persistence of poverty in the world, particularly in Africa, requires the ongoing mobilization of the international community and the elaboration within international bodies of coherent policies to confront the major problems of development. Given the fact that Africa has more least developed countries than any other continent in the world, the General Assembly's recent adoption of the Agenda for Development is of the greatest interest to us.

Africa continues to suffer the negative effects of the problems of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, difficult access for its products to international markets and decreased investment. Moreover, the effects of the globalization of the economy and the drop in official development assistance have reduced the capacity of African countries to tackle socio-economic problems successfully. The initiatives of the Paris Club, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to provide debt relief — initiatives that have already benefited some African countries — meet our concerns and we hope that Guinea-Bissau will soon be able to profit by them.

Respect for and the full exercise of fundamental human rights are factors for freedom, peace and guaranteed internal stability. Guinea-Bissau, which recognizes the importance of good governance, pluralistic democracy and a state of law, continues to work for the preservation of values intrinsic to the dignity of the individual and his full, harmonious development. In this regard, we wish to congratulate Mrs. Mary Robinson on her timely nomination to the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We wish her every success in the performance of her duties and call on all Member States to lend her the support she needs.

The rational use of our world's natural resources and environmental protection are responsibilities which, to varying degrees, fall to all mankind. Guinea-Bissau has, together with its partners, defined a strategy for sustainable development that respects ecological balances. The disappointing results of the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 at last June's special session of the General Assembly is clear proof that the international community must be much more committed to defining agreed policies for environmental protection.

The achievement of the ideals of the United Nations to which our peoples aspire, the need to reform and modernize our Organization, and international cooperative efforts are all the subjects of our collective thinking and the inspiration of our ongoing commitment. Indeed, given the challenges of the late twentieth century, our Organization continues to embody the greatest hopes of our peoples for a future of progress, well-being, social justice and understanding among all peoples.

As Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, said during the celebration of the United Nations fiftieth anniversary:

> "I would call for greater ... coordination of our efforts in order to forge a world Organization capable of preserving future generations from the scourge of war and to give the poorest and most helpless true reasons for hope, thus safeguarding the common interests of mankind." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 36th meeting, p.9]

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan, His Excellency Mr. Dawa Tsering.

**Mr. Tsering** (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey to all representatives the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, for the success of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

May I express, Sir, my heartfelt congratulations on your election to the high office of the presidency of the General Assembly. We are confident that with your vast personal experience and in-depth knowledge of the United Nations you will lead our deliberations in this important session to a fruitful conclusion.

I would like to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for the bold and innovative manner in which he led the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamic leadership of our Organization. I wish to congratulate him on his comprehensive report on the reform of the United Nations and also to express our appreciation to the Executive Coordinator for Reform and his team for their valuable contribution.

This session of the General Assembly has been widely regarded as a session for the reform of the United Nations. I shall therefore confine my remarks to this subject. The question of United Nations reform is not a new issue and has been the subject of ongoing discussions. We share the view that concrete steps must be taken this year so that the feeling of uncertainty can be put behind us and we can concentrate on other important challenges that confront our Organization.

Before we embark on the task of reforming the United Nations it is important that we first understand what the United Nations means to different Member States. The United Nations is certainly unparalleled in history as a forum for international dialogue and cooperation, as well as for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, for many of the larger Members it remains but one of several means of pursuing their national interests. For smaller Member countries, however, the United Nations remains the primary Organization for the protection and expression of their sovereignty. Many of them also rely heavily on the United Nations for their economic and social advancement. Any reform of the United Nations must therefore take into account the needs and aspirations of the majority of its Members, which are small developing countries. The United Nations must be able to protect the political independence of its smaller Members and support their social and economic development in order to enable them to meet their aspirations for peace and development without undue pressures or interference from outside.

The proposal for reform submitted by the Secretary-General is significant in that he has not only sought the views of Member States but has also taken into account the perspective of the United Nations staff, for the changes would have a direct bearing on their functions and responsibilities. In our view, this effort to involve Members States as well as the United Nations staff will provide a congenial atmosphere in which to discuss reforms and their subsequent implementation.

With regard to the reforms, there are clearly areas which fall within the mandate of the Secretary-General. It is our view that reforms which are already moving ahead in some areas must be allowed to do so. We find merit in clustering together various divisions within the United Nations Secretariat in the core areas of peace and security, humanitarian affairs, economic and social affairs and human rights. We also find the various coordination and planning mechanisms being put in place among the new broad clusters necessary and useful.

We look forward to receiving from the Secretary-General his report on the measures he is taking to implement the organizational changes which are within his mandate. While the General Assembly and some of the existing consultative mechanisms exist and will no doubt be used for interaction with the Secretariat, there should be mechanisms by which the general membership can interact with the newly formed divisions.

The new post of Deputy Secretary-General is necessary in our view, given the formidable number of responsibilities that the Secretary-General currently has to shoulder. The role of the Deputy Secretary-General should, however, be clearly defined in the larger interests of the Organization.

The question of refocusing the work of the General Assembly itself is an interesting proposal which we fully support. The long debates in the Assembly, as well as in numerous Committees, and the large number of issues and resolutions, are well beyond the capacity of many of

the smaller Member countries to handle. We support the idea of dealing with thematic issues, both within the plenary and the Committees, during the annual sessions.

We also support the view that the follow-up to all global conferences should be properly tied to the work of the General Assembly. The resolutions and other decisions adopted during the General Assembly must be organized in such a manner that they will have a direct bearing on the work of the Secretariat, providing both guidance and direction.

The proposed Development Group that has been constituted, bringing greater coordination of the three key United Nations development agencies — namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) — is of special interest to the majority of small developing countries to which the activities of these agencies provide significant support. It must be recognized that the coordination among these three agencies must support the ongoing programmes which these agencies have arrived at with individual countries and that the changes should be brought about without any disruption to the current programmes, both in financial and programming terms.

As a country which has benefited greatly from the activities of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, we express our gratitude to these and other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies for their assistance to my country. The experience of Bhutan and many smaller developing countries clearly indicates that there is a continued role for these United Nations bodies and agencies. It is our hope that with better coordination within the Development Group and field-level implementation of their activities there will be enhanced financial support by the donor community.

The proposal by the Secretary-General to have a high-level ministerial commission to review the work of other United Nations agencies and their relationship with the General Assembly and the Secretariat is timely. The work of the specialized agencies is extremely important, and it is time their methods of work and their activities were reviewed so that all United Nations programmes are better synchronized.

All the efforts to reform and revitalize the United Nations will not be possible if the United Nations does not have a sound financial position. The financial health of the United Nations must be restored. All members must work earnestly towards meeting this objective. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to create a revolving credit fund to meet the Organization's funding. However, the primary requirement must be met from the assessed contributions of Member States. In this regard, it is our view that the negotiations on the scale of assessments must proceed and be resolved at an early date in a manner that is acceptable to all Member States. We also firmly believe that all Member States must meet their financial obligations to the Organization through the unconditional payment of their assessed dues in full and on time. The United Nations must also institute more dynamic means of fund management, including utilization of the financial market in a prudent manner. All legal restrictions to such management should be reviewed.

One of the most important issues relating to the reform of the United Nations remains the membership of the Security Council. It is our view that the discussions on this issue, emanating from complex and fundamentally inequitable premises, have led to the current difficulties. However, the continued status quo does not benefit the vast majority of Member States. Bhutan fully supports the Non-Aligned Movement's position that there must be expansion of the permanent membership to include the developed and developing countries and that there should be additional non-permanent seats. The expansion must take into account the new security needs and the objective criteria, of who would best be able to shoulder the new responsibilities. We believe that on the basis of objective criteria, Japan, as one of the foremost economic and political powers in the world today, qualifies for permanent membership. Among developing countries, India's case merits serious consideration for permanent membership due to its massive population — one out of nearly six people on our planet is an Indian — and its great economic potential, in addition to the fact that India has played an active role in all United Nations activities. Discussion on the expansion must continue, and we should not be deterred by the complex nature of the subject. We remain confident that an early and equitable solution can be found.

It is our hope that the reform of the United Nations and the renewal of the United Nations can be completed in the two remaining years of this century, so that during the millennium session of the General Assembly, in the year 2000, we can concentrate on the vision and aspirations of mankind for the twenty-first century.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Errol Glenn Snijders.

**Mr. Snijders** (Suriname): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Suriname, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that under your wise and able guidance our deliberations will be fruitful. May I express our appreciation for the excellent manner in which your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, presided over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to convey our profound admiration of and gratitude for the dynamic leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in pursuance of the noble objectives of this unique world body in this era in which new challenges and opportunities face humankind. We salute his efforts to bring our Organization more in line with the pressing demands of our time.

When we express our feelings of solidarity with the less fortunate of the world, our sympathy also goes out to the Government and the people of the sister island of Montserrat as they suffer the consequences of a geologic disaster in these dismal days of their history. The important support that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, within their limited possibilities, have given to Montserrat to help alleviate the pain merits recognition and is worth following. I therefore seize this opportunity to appeal to other countries to fulfil their moral obligations to our brothers and sisters in need.

Within the context of an increasingly integrated and complex global economic system of production and distribution, trade liberalization and globalization of financial markets, the major thrust of the development strategy of the Government of the Republic of Suriname lies in the revitalization and strengthening of production and export capacity as the main engines of growth while maintaining financial and monetary stability.

In response to the need to diversify the export base of the economy, a good deal of impetus was given this year to the expansion of the mining sector by the recent opening of an oil refinery that will enable my country to meet domestic demands for heavy oil, by new gold-mining operations and by the commercial exploitation of other mineral deposits. Furthermore, we have initiated the construction of two important bridges. Together with the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure, including access roads in the coastal area and to the interior of the country and the operation of a ferry service with our neighbouring country, the cooperative Republic of Guyana, these bridges will offer new opportunities for trade, house construction, transport, tourism and employment in Suriname.

It is often said that progress in building lasting democracies and stronger market economies is increasingly threatened by slow growth, weak institutions, poverty and wealth inequality. Persistent economic hardships for the majority of the people can likewise damage the credibility of democratic Governments. The struggle against poverty and social injustice is therefore the greatest challenge to the Government of Suriname.

In our ceaseless struggle as a small nation to achieve people-centred development goals, the present Government, within the international constraints of sustainable development and environmental protection, will continue its endeavours to increase domestic efficiency and international competitiveness in agriculture, production, manufacturing and export, as well as to strengthen the institutions of local entrepreneurship, with a view to ensuring political stability and fostering equitable economic growth.

Bearing in mind that which has been referred to as the dark side of the globalization process, and with a view to avoiding marginalization and creating outsiders to the global economy, it is imperative that we continue to recognize the small, fragile and vulnerable economies of the Caribbean, including Suriname, and of other regions in the world. This should guarantee that they will be given special treatment during a transitional period in which they will still require exceptions, waivers and other transitional arrangements in the broader context of international trade liberalization and economic integration.

Hence the Surinamese Government attaches special significance to the May 1997 Bridgetown Declaration of Principles on Caribbean Community-United States cooperation in responding to the challenges that the new millennium poses for our region, and it is looking forward to an expeditious implementation of the Plan of Action appended thereto. We also attach great importance to the timely implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and are looking forward to the 1998 review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on outstanding chapters and issues of the Programme of Action.

The Government of Suriname welcomes the call of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs for a renewed and concerted international commitment to a forward-looking drug strategy for the twenty-first century and, to that end, the convocation of a special session of the General Assembly in June 1998. That session will prepare a global drug-control strategy and new ways to promote international and regional coo,eration in the fight against the worldwide drug problem that undermines in particular the economic and social prospects of many small developing nations.

While Suriname cannot be considered a drug-producing country, it is afflicted by this scourge through producers from outside the country who misuse its territory as a transit point for drugs bound for other countries, where the availability and extensive use of drugs is creating a huge, profitable market that threatens the well-being of so many and feeds the greed of but a few.

To demonstrate our resolve to eradicate this evil from our territory, we will join with neighbouring countries to coordinate our strategies and efforts. For that purpose Suriname will convene, at the beginning of 1998 and in concert with Guyana, Brazil, France and Venezuela, an international conference on defining strategies and actions against the misuse and illicit trafficking of drugs. We appeal to those who are also committed to this struggle to assist us in this endeavour.

Reflecting on our special session on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Government of Suriname applauds the adoption in July of this year of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, including the statement of commitment by Member countries. We expect the next comprehensive review of its implementation in the year 2002 to demonstrate greater measurable progress in achieving sustainable development.

The Government of Suriname feels concern about the issue of finance for sustainable development. Since Rio 1992, only four developed States have fulfilled their Agenda 21 commitment towards the target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance. As it was agreed that for most developing countries official development assistance is still a main source of external development financing and cannot generally be replaced by private capital inflows, I should like to urge the donor community to intensify efforts to reverse the declining trend in official development assistance as we experience it today.

The situation in the Middle East continues to pose a great threat to international peace and security. The Oslo agreement of 1993, signed by the two parties, embodies the hope that a lasting solution to this conflict is within reach, since it establishes the basis for a lasting peace in the Middle East. We feel that the peace process must be carried on urgently, with a well-defined timetable. We therefore support the co-sponsors of the peace process in their effort to bring the parties back to the negotiating table with a view to securing durable peace in the Middle East.

Allow me to make a few remarks on the important issues of the reform and strengthening of the United Nations and of more equitable representation in the Security Council. Since its birth, our Organization has grown from 5 to 185 Member States, but the Security Council still reflects the world as it was in 1945. The Government of Suriname therefore underscores the need for an expansion of, and a more equitable representation in, the membership of the Security Council.

The reform of the Security Council should not only make the Council's membership more representative and more legitimate but should also enhance its transparency and openness towards other Member States and non-members in order to convey its important messages in an amplified and more effective manner. Hence we welcome the recent measures taken by the Council to enhance its transparency.

The present Government of Suriname takes the position that the countries of the Caribbean and Latin America should be included in any agreed expansion of the Council, within the context of the principles of equitable geographic distribution and the sovereign equality of States. The reform should not result in discriminatory treatment between the developed and the developing countries. We furthermore consider as integral parts of Security Council reform its expansion, the reform of its working methods and the issue of the veto. The veto should preferably be restricted to issues falling under Chapter VII of our Charter.

Increased globalization and the emergence of new challenges and threats require closer cooperation between States at a global level. Within this context, it is of utmost importance to reaffirm and maintain the role of the United Nations as a major actor in cooperation between States, especially development cooperation. In this light, my Government welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to propose a comprehensive reform

programme to the General Assembly which is geared towards strengthening the efficiency of the Secretariat and fixing a stronger focus on economic and social development issues.

The Government of Suriname supports in general the reform proposals of the Secretary-General and their key elements. These reform proposals as a whole represent a timely and welcome initiative, given the fact that in today's world the need has progressively increased for global common action on a number of pressing problems, such as the eradication of poverty, humanitarian emergencies, refugee problems, climate change and desertification, diminishing official development assistance funding, drugs, nuclear disarmament, the implementation of Agenda 21, democracy and the maintenance of peace and security in various regions of the world.

All this calls for a stronger United Nations to promote a renewed multilateral cooperation based on common interests and shared responsibility. We must empower the United Nations now so that it can confront the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

One of the best ways to re-establish trust in the United Nations is to enhance the impact of United Nations development activities at the country level. In this regard the Surinamese Government endorses the proposal to establish a "United Nations House".

In closing, I wish to reiterate that the Government of the Republic of Suriname is committed to contributing to the ongoing process of reform of our Organization.

We see the reform proposals of the Secretary-General as a first step in the right direction, although much more is left to be done. We feel that the United Nations system should be made stronger, more effective and more efficient in order to meet the priorities set by all its Members — not just the priorities of the economically strong and the militarily powerful but, especially, the priorities of the weak and vulnerable States, which should be prevented from becoming outsiders in the global economy.

**The President:** I call next on The Honourable Lieutenant-General Mompati S. Merafhe, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Botswana.

**Mr. Merafhe** (Botswana): Allow me, Sir, to express to you and to your delegation our sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. As you are an experienced United Nations diplomat, we entertain great expectations of your tenure of office as President of the Assembly.

We wish also to pay tribute to the outgoing President, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, whose stewardship of the fifty-first session will forever be remembered for its creativity and dynamism. We wish him well and thank him and his country, Malaysia, for a job well done.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves in ample measure our gratitude for the professionalism he has demonstrated thus far in his leadership of the United Nations. His reports on the work of the Organization and on the wide-ranging reform of the United Nations system renew the confidence and trust we reposed in him when we elected him only nine months ago.

We live in a rapidly changing world. The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented expansion of world trade and commerce, and the trend continues unabated. National boundaries are being transcended with ease in the interaction of national economies through a process which has been christened globalization. In the international political arena, there is increasing unanimity amongst the community of nations and other global actors that narrow national interests should be superseded by universal interests.

These complex changes in the world outlook call for an enhanced role for the United Nations in international affairs lest change become brutal, especially for the developing countries. The United Nations has gained new international stature in recent years, thanks to the extirpation of the politics of paralysis of the cold-war era. "Blue Helmets" are today being deployed in situations formerly considered to be outside the range of the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations has also built international consensus through a series of conferences and meetings on areas and issues as diverse as women and development, youth, the environment, human rights, ageing, population, social development and human settlements, education and health, the outcome of which will guide the thinking and actions of the international community into the next millennium. Furthermore, the United Nations has proved its capability to deal effectively with the serious threats posed by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, a capability which is

often frustrated by a lack of political will and commitment on the part of Member States.

In short, in the present-day reality, no one country, big or small, rich or poor, weak or powerful, can exist in isolation or act unilaterally without suffering the consequences of its actions. Terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime, the depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, receding rain forests, advancing deserts, diminishing fresh-water reserves, poverty, disease and many more recognize no national boundaries; only collective action by the States Members of the Organization can arrest and reverse their advance.

The United Nations is the mother of genuine multilateralism, and it should occupy centre stage in our thinking about international relations. The heavy responsibilities reposed in the world body by present-day international realities demand that the United Nations system should undergo substantial reform if it is to respond more efficiently and effectively to the needs and concerns of its Member States and their peoples, now and in the future. The United Nations system needs to be streamlined to remove administrative bottlenecks, weed out corruption and other malpractices and eliminate duplication in the activities of its organs, agencies, programmes, funds and offices.

It is in that spirit that Botswana welcomes the recent reform initiatives of the Secretary-General as the basis for further discussion and debate on the reform process. My delegation will have occasion to pronounce itself on the various elements of the reform package in due course. At this juncture, I can only observe that Botswana is disposed to a holistic consideration of the package by the General Assembly. The reform proposals constitute a single unit, and its constituent parts should be discussed with that understanding in mind.

This means, therefore, that those elements of the package — the greatest number, we would hope — which are acceptable to the majority of delegations, or on which general consensus is attained, should be implemented forthwith. True, many of the proposals are indeed revolutionary, as the Secretary-General himself concedes, and, if approved, they would in a positive sense change permanently the way the Organization operates. The reform package is the broadest and most extensive in the history of the United Nations and, in my view, is an appropriate response to the magnitude of the clamour for reform which has echoed through the halls of this Organization and which for some time now has even threatened its very existence.

It would have been the height of absurdity for my delegation to have expected the whole reform package to be agreeable or acceptable to every delegation in this Hall, but I find the arguments and complaints from some quarters that the package does not go far enough preposterous to say the least. Reform, as the Secretary-General rightly reminds us, is not an event but a process. Reform should not and must not be apocalyptic. It cannot and must not become synonymous with the downsizing of the Organization to the extent that it would deprive it of the requisite human and material resources to render services to Member States, especially the developing countries.

Such reform would be inimical to the efficacy of the United Nations. Reform should lead to a more efficient, more effective and more relevant United Nations, that is a United Nations with a capacity to foresee and respond adequately and expeditiously to imminent disaster situations around the world and to other needs and concerns of humankind today.

The Secretary-General's reform proposals have signalled the direction to take in the reform process; it is the collaborative response of the Member States which is awaited. I believe we are all very serious about reform of the United Nations; now is the time to approve and implement those reform proposals on which there is general consensus. Our commitment, seriousness and sincerity about United Nations reform would increasingly be called into doubt if by the beginning of the fifty-third session of the Assembly we had not implemented any of the reform proposals contained in the Secretary-General's reform package.

*Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

No one country, region or group of countries can arrogate to itself the right to dictate the reform agenda. What should be established is a balanced, equitable and non-discriminatory reform agenda in which the common wishes and interests of every Member State can find expression. This is the guiding principle my delegation will follow in its contribution to the ongoing reform process.

The Secretary-General's reform package is not the only momentous issue in the United Nations reform

process. Close to four years have elapsed, and the debate on Security Council reform continues without an end in sight. It is obvious that, unless we can suddenly acquire Solomonic wisdom, we are unlikely to come to a successful conclusion of this debate in another four years or even much longer. Yet there has emerged a body of thought which favours an increase in the membership of the Security Council, in both the permanent and non-permanent member categories, to reflect the configuration of today's international political realities.

Botswana was a member of the Security Council until the end of last year, and we are convinced more than ever before that the composition of the membership of the Security Council, as well as its working methods and procedures, needs reform. It is time for the debate on Security Council reform to be brought to a successful conclusion, so that all geographical regions can be equitably represented in the Council. We should not allow the debate to become sterile or degenerate into a dialogue between the deaf and the dumb.

The financial health of the Organization is another issue which remains a source of deep concern and anguish to my delegation. The United Nations cannot be expected to deliver the goods without the necessary financial lifeblood. In other words, the United Nations cannot operate on the basis of a shoestring budget and be expected to carry out the heavy responsibilities imposed on it every day by Member States. It is therefore imperative that each and every Member State should meet its financial obligations to this Organization on time, in full and without any conditionalities, and clear all its arrears as a matter of urgency.

The international community has made considerable progress in the struggle for democracy around the world since the end of the cold war. Today, peoples and nations across the spectrum of the African continent live in relative peace and tranquillity and are engaged in the reconstruction of their national economies, thanks to the emergence of a democratic culture. In spite of these positive developments, the reality is that Africa is still bedeviled by deadly conflicts.

However, we are happy to acknowledge that fighting has ceased in Liberia. The Liberian people have at long last freely chosen their leaders, and their verdict was respected.

The long-suffering and economically plundered Democratic Republic of the Congo today enjoys relative peace and security after a short but devastating crisis that ended with the overthrow of a 32-year dictatorship. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo need the understanding and sympathy of the international community as they grapple with the reconstruction of their country.

The final settlement of the conflict in Angola continues to elude the international community, but, thank God, there has been no resumption of hostilities so far. Progress is painfully slow, due to the failure by UNITA to honour its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol, and especially its refusal to disarm and demobilize its forces. The United Nations should monitor the situation in Angola very closely to ensure that the present slow progress does not assume a state of permanence or lead to a reversal of the gains made so far under the Lusaka process.

The international community should continue to pay closer attention to the situation in Somalia and help the Somali parties hold a peace conference through which they can settle, once and for all, their long-running fratricidal conflict.

There is a renewed sense of expectation that the efforts deployed to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara will bear fruit. It is our hope and wish that the Secretary-General, through his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, will achieve a breakthrough which will lead to the final settlement of the Western Sahara conflict in the very near future.

The situation in Sierra Leone is troubling. The overthrow of a democratically elected Government in Sierra Leone five months ago was a most unfortunate reversal of the political gains that had been achieved in that country. The international community has taken the correct line in making it clear that it will no longer tolerate any military dictatorships. The rejection and isolation of the military junta in Sierra Leone should serve as a warning to military leaders with similar designs that military rule is unacceptable, whatever the justification. The ballot, and not the bullet, should be the only way through which political leadership can change hands.

While the situation in the Balkans remains generally tense, there is a light at the end of the tunnel signalling the arrival of a new era of national reconciliation in the constituent States of the former Yugoslavia. The time has come for the various ethnic groups in the former

Yugoslavia to realize that none of their countries can exist as an ethnically pure State without causing political tensions and reawakening centuries-old hatreds. Their future and destinies are, fortunately or unfortunately, inextricably intertwined by reason of geography and history. They should accept their fate for what it is. Conflict and war have failed to resolve the ethnic composition of these States in the past, and are unlikely to resolve them in the future.

We salute the Secretary-General for his recent initiative which brought together the leaders of the two sides in the Cyprus conflict in New York for talks. We encourage him to continue his good offices until the parties reach a final solution to this decades old conflict.

Botswana supports the Middle East peace process. Experience has shown that peace in that complex cauldron of conflict cannot be achieved through war and bloodshed. Only painstaking and rigorous negotiations conducted in an atmosphere of give and take can lead to the desired result: the peace that everyone is yearning for in the Middle East.

We hope that the State of Israel will realize the insensitivity of the construction of new settlements on Palestinian lands. This has contributed in no small measure to the current crisis in the Middle East peace process. No effort should be spared to put the Middle East peace process back on track so that the hopes and aspirations of the ordinary peoples of that region to live together in peace as good neighbours may be realized.

We welcome the ongoing talks between the two Koreas, in which China and the United States are also participants. It is our ardent hope that the talks will lead to a decrease in political tensions in the Korean peninsula, and that the two Koreas will henceforth establish some common ground which will assist in the eventual reunification of their divided country.

I wish to welcome the recent conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I wish the Convention enjoyed the support of all nations. Anti-personnel mines are diabolical and cowardly instruments of warfare which indiscriminately kill and maim their unsuspecting victims. They should have been banned a long time ago, before they claimed more lives and maimed many people. It is our fervent desire that the Convention will soon enjoy the support of all Member States. It is hoped that the experience gained in the campaign for the elaboration and conclusion of this Convention will be extended to all weapons of mass destruction.

Several developing countries are still wrestling with daunting economic and social problems. The number of countries whose people still live in abject poverty and lack basic nourishment is on the rise, especially in Africa. Regrettably, multilateral assistance is declining rapidly in relation to the rising poverty in the developing countries. Only a handful of developed countries meet the agreed goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. At the same time, private capital flows have been directed to only a few countries. The United Nations funds and programmes are also unable to implement their respective mandates due to lack of resources. It is important that this trend be not only arrested but reversed through strengthened international cooperation for development.

For meaningful development to take root in the developing countries, an enabling international environment should be established which can address such issues as macroeconomic stability, more open trade regimes in developed countries, stable financial systems, reasonable debt initiatives, such as those proposed under the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, and greater financial flows from developed countries to the developing countries. The international community must also make concerted efforts to support the development programmes of the developing countries in capacity-building, infrastructure and manpower development.

Obviously, there will be an absolute need for a turnaround in the political and economic orientation of the developed countries in favour of global prosperity if these objectives are to be realized. It is such enlightened thinking, which promises economic and political rewards to the greatest number of the Member States of the United Nations, which is absent in the development bureaucracies of many developed countries.

As always, our faith in the United Nations as a repository of the hopes and aspirations of humankind is genuine, deep-rooted and unassailable. We are a young and developing country in a troubled world — a world caught between the extremes of rampant globalization and resurgent isolationism. Our survival rests with this global Organization and its Charter, to which we pledge our unstinting commitment and loyalty.

**The Acting President:** I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs and Local Government of Grenada, His Excellency The Honourable Raphael Fletcher.

**Mr. Fletcher** (Grenada): In my address to this noble Assembly last year, I drew attention to the significance of virtue and, furthermore, to the enhancement of the release of the power which resides in virtue, through the supply of appropriate means. Moreover, I invited reflection on the quintessential sameness of all humankind and urged that this, together with a genuine commitment to virtue, be adopted as the guiding principles of the General Assembly as it addresses and deliberates upon the realities of human interaction in our contemporary world.

As it is for any individual society or nation, so it is for the international global community. Ethics is the science whose aim is to produce the good man and woman, while politics is the science which aims at fashioning the good society. Thus, politics must be founded upon and unceasingly informed by ethics.

Doubtless this is an ideal. Nonetheless, it is an ideal we must constantly strive to achieve if we are to realize peace within and among our nations — peace, which was described by Thomas Aquinas as the tranquillity of order.

In this era of accelerating change in so many areas in every portion of our diverse global community, it is of singular importance to the well-being of each of our individual national communities, as it is for the overall international global community, that we recognize, observe and be faithful to those values and principles which, inherently, are unchanging.

One such unchanging value is that of right — moral right: what Plato conceived of as the virtue of justice, and what in Roman law was characterized as the *jus*, or moral law. Indeed, it is rather significant that Plato perceived the whole function of education as being to elicit the best things that are latent in the soul, and to do so by directing the soul to the right things.

I am highly honoured and deeply pleased to address, on behalf of the Government and the people of Grenada, this Assembly at its fifty-second regular session, during the course of which change must be a transcending theme, as also must be the initiation, institution and prudent management of change in the pursuit and conduct of international affairs.

On behalf of my delegation, I express to this Assembly the warm greetings of the Government and the people of Grenada. I also express our sincere congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan on his accession to the office of Secretary-General, as well as on his manner of addressing the duties deriving therefrom. We rejoice in his demonstration of virtue, and we believe that his profound knowledge of the United Nations augurs well for his leadership in pursuance of international peace and security.

My Government is heartened by his commitment to the reform of the Organization and is reassured by his efforts to fashion a more effective and efficient United Nations system. We are hopeful that one of the benefits which will accrue from such an improved system will be the enhancement of the economic viability of small developing States, such as ours; and we further hope that his efforts to realize the system envisaged will not be frustrated by the withholding of the substantial overall payments which are due.

My delegation joins me in extending warm congratulations to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We commend Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia for his exemplary conduct of the proceedings of the fifty-first session.

The rapidly changing global environment presents grave challenges to small States, especially small island States such as Grenada. It also does so for the United Nations, whose very institution was prompted by the adoption of the ethic of a confraternity of nations informed by a common subscription to the concept of the empowerment of virtue through the furnishing of adequate and appropriate means in order that right might prevail in the international community.

In this latter regard, attention is especially invited to the notion of global trade and liberalization as it is currently regulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), with its inherent inconsistencies, which operate to the disadvantage of the smaller economies. The WTO rules relating now to the products of agriculture and agro-industry bear testimony to the injustice inflicted upon those of us who live and labour within the confines of small economies — witness the recent ruling on bananas, which underscores the insensitivity displayed by way of the challenge which triggered it.

Moreover, the Uruguay Round Agreements require a massive legislative agenda on Grenada's part — as they undoubtedly do for most developing countries. Our national laws in the areas of trade in goods and services as well as intellectual property must be reviewed and extensive legislative changes made. Thus we must acquire the necessary legal expertise to work on this project until implementation is fully accomplished - and all this by the end of the year 2000.

We shall, of course, make full use of the assistance that is available through WTO as well as that offered by international bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Nonetheless, it must be explicitly stated that, in Grenada's view, the Uruguay Round Agreements have created for small developing States significantly more burdens than the benefits they are proclaimed to bring under the banner of global free trade — at least now, and for the foreseeable future, unless corrective measures are soon instituted.

My Government continues in its efforts to restructure the Grenada economy and is pursuing a programme of economic diversification. This involves broadening and enhancing sectors such as agro-processing, light manufacturing, crafts, services — including offshore financial services — tourism and agriculture.

Nevertheless, my Government is deeply aware that the success of its economic policies will depend significantly on the support of the multilateral financial institutions and also of friendly countries in respect of training and the dissemination of knowledge and skills, as well as the setting up of enterprises and facilities that are strategic to secondary economic growth.

Accordingly, my Government is pleased to have recorded in the annals of the Assembly, its gratitude for, and appreciation of, the assistance which Grenada has so far received, as well as that which we are currently receiving, from the European Union through the Lomé Agreement, and from other friendly countries.

Despite constraints such as I have referred to, as well as others, my Government continues in its efforts to stimulate employment and enhance employability. In the latter regard, we are now in the process of institutionalizing on-the-job training for our unemployed youth, whilst expanding our formal programmes for skills training. As for stimulating employment, special emphasis is being placed on self-employment — and this by way of fostering the small enterprise and micro-enterprise sectors. For we are convinced that the development of these sectors is crucial to our preferred process for national development. We believe that through such endeavours our people will grow in dignity and self-reliance.

My Government will continue to provide an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive and expand. And we seek the active partnership of the multilateral institutions as well as of the international community, through joint ventures, technological transfers and financial and technical assistance to provide the impetus to sustained economic growth.

Democracy and good governance can flourish only in an environment of peace — an environment characterized by the tranquillity of order; not an order that is imposed, but an order which springs from mutual trust and mutual regard amongst the individuals who compose the particular society; an order which is constantly revitalized and continually enhanced by mutual love; an order which resonates to the truth that "My origin is their origin, my conscience is their conscience, my contention is their contention, and my pilgrimage is their pilgrimage". In this context, we invite attention to the apparent emergence recently of terrorism in the Caribbean region, with the bombings in Cuba.

The kind of order referred to would inherently involve individual social and economic well-being: true prosperity, individual and societal.

At the international global community level, such order is realizable only by way of a concept and praxis for a new global human order such as was enunciated by the late President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana and corroborated by the leaders of the Group of 7 countries in their communiqué "Making a Success of Globalization for the Benefit of All" (A/51/208, annex II).

The pursuit of true politics in relation to the fashioning of the confraternity of nations requires that we strive to institute such a new global human order.

Within the compass of such a global human order, there inevitably would be the eradication of the crippling and strangulating debt burden which afflicts so devastatingly the very poor and so dehumanizingly the poorest countries of our world. So also would be action against environmental degradation, and towards

sustainable economic development, especially in the poorer countries and particularly in small island developing States.

Similarly, as to the eradication of poverty worldwide — and, in this regard it is fitting that I repeat here the observation of the Right Honourable Clare Short, United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development:

> "A world that has one in five of its people living in abject poverty is certainly not just and it is also dangerously unstable".

Natural disasters, particularly in small island States, require special concern on the part of the confraternity of nations. The devastation recently experienced in Montserrat trumpets the need for a United Nations programme to deal with the aftermath of such natural destruction.

Grenada welcomes the recent United Nations initiative in respect of Haiti, and salutes every country participating in this noble endeavour, as well as the United Nations and its officers, whose vision informed that initiative.

We welcome also the steps towards achieving peace between parties in countries in Central America, and we applaud them. Indeed, as the current Chairman of the Association of Caribbean States, Grenada rejoices in such action. For, through the Association, we in the Caribbean region seek to widen and deepen the process of integration amongst the island States of the Caribbean and those mainland States whose shores are lapped by the Caribbean Sea — and this includes Cuba.

My Government is acutely mindful that poor States are peculiarly vulnerable to the violation of their territorial integrity, since they can ill afford the wherewithal to ensure non-encroachment in the vicinity of their borders. And the larger such poor continental States are, the greater that particular vulnerability.

Similarly, for small island States, in particular those of the Caribbean, where the threat is not so much to territorial integrity but to security, that threat is posed by those engaged in the illicit business of narcotics trafficking, both by way of buying and selling. Our small island States of the Caribbean have become primary and secondary transshipment centres en route from the large producers to the commensurately large consumers. My Government therefore asks earnestly that this noble Assembly address this matter in accordance with the ethic of the true politics relating to the overall international community of humankind.

The current United Nations International Drug Control Programme is indeed commendable, and Grenada is pleased to be actively participating in it at the pace we can best afford.

Nonetheless, it cannot but be admitted that this Programme does not offer, much less provide, the protection which is needed for our people — particularly our youth — against the ravishment of drug use and the blight which eventually afflicts the small-scale transporters, or so-called mules. Surely this process of transshipment can be severely curtailed, if not completely eradicated, through planned, concerted international action.

My Government's concern for youth and children is not confined to Grenada. Nor is it limited to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean Community or in the Association of Caribbean States. Our concern embraces youth and children everywhere. Accordingly, we condemn the exploitation of youth and children in any form. We say no to the abuse of children for pornography and prostitution.

My Government welcomes the recent conclusion of the Convention on the comprehensive banning of anti-personnel landmines, and we urge a significant acceleration in the controlled destruction of those mines which are relics of campaigns of war of one scale or another.

In relation to the Security Council, Grenada unequivocally supports its expansion in a manner such as would facilitate the realization of true politics in the overall international community. This, we believe, would involve an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership.

Both such increases, in our view, should be characterized by a significant presence of developing countries. For, in Grenada's view, what is required in the reformed Security Council is not more of the same kind of distribution of perception, but more equity among the component parts of the spectrum of perception.

The very notion of equity inevitably calls forth the notion of justice. In the context of justice in the United Nations, there arises quite effortlessly the case of the Republic of China on Taiwan. To all who subscribe to

the principle of the right of a people to self-determination, the case for membership in the United Nations for the Republic of China on Taiwan is a compelling one. Indeed, it is incontestable. For, some 50 years ago, these people chose self-determination. They voted with their feet as they moved from their homes on mainland China to the island of Taiwan, and today 21.3 million people practise democracy in the Republic of China on Taiwan. Their economic achievements are well and widely known, as is their willingness to participate in the international community as a Member of the United Nations.

What more is required for the Republic of China to be admitted to United Nations membership? One may well ask. My answer: justice. The mention of justice evokes recollection of two very insightful observations which deserve to be shared in this noble Assembly. First, Reinhold Niebur, in his Foreword to "The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness", offered the following comment on justice:

> "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but Man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

Well might we enquire as to the origin of this inclination to injustice. But the success or failure to identify that origin notwithstanding, an effective manner of dealing with that inclination is provided by Plato's construct for education, which is centred on exposure of the soul to the right things.

And second, in his Foreword to Allan Bloom's thought-provoking study on American higher education — the number-one bestseller of its time, one decade ago, Saul Bellow offered a view that is particularly pertinent to the notion of exposure of the soul to the right things. Saul Bellow contends that:

> "In the greatest confusion there is an open channel to the soul ... The channel is always there, and it is our business to keep it open, to have access to the deepest part of ourselves — to that part of us which is conscious of a higher consciousness ... The soul has to find and hold its ground against hostile forces, sometimes embodied in ideas which frequently deny its very existence, and which indeed often seem to be trying to annul it altogether."

The Assembly may well ask, "How does the soul hold its ground?" My reply: through virtue and constant exposure to the right things. Let right prevail.

May God bless the President of, and everyone participating in, this fifty-second regular session of this noble Assembly, which through His grace will be a transforming blessing to our world.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Matuszewski** (Poland): The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, in his statement to the Assembly on 2 October 1997, made a number of references to the process of the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and how it is perceived by the Government of the Republic of Belarus.

We have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply not to engage in polemics, since we are aware of the fact that Belarus has its own distinctive position on this subject. We are, nevertheless, bemused by the way the Foreign Minister chose to express his country's position. He stated, in particular:

> "In the event that we had on our western borders not the friendly sovereign Polish State we have now but a military organization, it would certainly push us to seriously analyse and reconsider our national security considerations." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 21st meeting]

Having heard such a statement, one is at least entitled to pose some serious questions. Did the Foreign Minister want to imply that the friendly sovereign Republic of Poland to which he made reference might suddenly disappear, to be replaced by what he characterized as a military organization? And, if so, what makes him believe that?

If the Foreign Minister of Belarus, in the portion of his statement to which I have just referred, meant to refer to the implications of Poland's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance, we would like to assure him of the following: Poland, as a member of NATO, will continue to be a sovereign and friendly neighbour of Belarus. Anything that attempts to imply the contrary is, for us,

unacceptable. We hope that the wording chosen by the Foreign Minister of Belarus was not meant to make such an attempt.

The good-neighbourly and friendly relations between Poland and Belarus constitute an important historic asset. Poland will spare no efforts to foster them. We would like to assure our Belarusian friends that to have a friendly sovereign State as a neighbour is undoubtedly a mutual desire.

**Mr. Ndaruzaniye** (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): On Friday, 3 October 1997, at the end of the day, we heard a statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made in the General Assembly on 2 October 1997 by the Minister for External Relations and Cooperation of Burundi.

On behalf of my delegation, I will not go back over all the points my colleague made, but I would like simply at the outset to welcome the interest that Tanzania and the international community have shown in helping the people and the Government of Burundi in their efforts to move beyond the crisis that has now lasted for nearly four years.

In those efforts, the people of Burundi remain the key element, and no solution to the crisis can possibly be found without our people, even one that might come from the international community.

It is with that concern in mind that for more than a year the Government of Burundi has been engaged in a peace process based on an extensive consultation of our people through domestic debate and on the peace conferences held abroad, so that all the people of Burundi, without exception, could be involved in inclusive political negotiations open to all parties concerned in the conflict in Burundi.

We hail the efforts that have been made by a number of special envoys and representatives of the international community alongside the designated mediator, but we also hope that the obstacles pointed out by the Head of the delegation of Burundi in his statement of 2 October 1997, obstacles that stand in the way of such mediation, might be cleared away so as to increase the chances for success in the second phase of the political negotiations, which are open to all. The Government of Burundi is waiting to be consulted by the facilitator as to the venue and date for the opening of those negotiations.

Moreover, we are convinced that such obstacles could not possibly be attributable to any friend of ours or to any country friendly to ours and working for peace in Burundi.

Burundi's current problems are the result of a confluence of many different factors and external and internal political and social events that would be very difficult indeed to go into here and now before the General Assembly.

The total and illegal economic blockade that has been imposed on the people of Burundi for over a year now is in no way contributing to the restoration of peace. On the contrary, it is killing a people through hunger and disease, as if the genocide and other massacres already inflicted on them had not been trial enough. We ask those responsible for the blockade to lift it, for the people it hits hardest are the most vulnerable, many of them children, and they deserve everyone's protection.

Turning to the question of Burundi refugees, Burundi has signed every accord of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, as well as the tripartite Burundi-Tanzanian-Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees accords on this issue. All machinery must be brought into play to resolve this matter within the aforementioned context.

I shall not try the Assembly's patience further, but in conclusion I should like to reaffirm the commitment of the people and Government of Burundi to seeking a peaceful solution to the present crisis through political negotiations open to all the parties concerned.

Only through dialogue can confidence, peace and democracy in our country be rebuilt.

**Mr. Jabir** (United Republic of Tanzania): We have heard the representative of Burundi. Since his statement contained no new element, I wish only to reiterate what my delegation said in the Assembly last Friday. The problems of Burundi are not bilateral, with Tanzania or indeed with the region. The problems are in Burundi and among its people. The attempt to externalize the problems is unfortunate and must be rejected.

My country has stated that its only desire is to assist. It has no political agenda in that country. It is up to the Burundi authorities to make it easier for Tanzania and, indeed, the international community, to help. We cannot help and do so efficiently unless the Burundi

authorities face the reality of a negotiated settlement. There is no alternative to that.

The accusation of partiality or armed aggression or insecurity of venue are all smoke screens to mask the deep-seated reluctance of the Burundi military authorities to pursue a negotiated political settlement. This should be rejected.

My country remains committed to facilitating dialogue and peace in Burundi. A peaceful Burundi is a better neighbour with which to interact and trade. We look forward to the day when we will be spared the cyclical inflow of refugees, when the people of Burundi will not live in perpetual fear and when the country will be stable and at peace.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*